



News Release

For immediate release: November 9, 2009

(09-176)

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Water system owner faces stiff state fine for negligence

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Health announced today it will fine Conrad Elledge, the owner and operator of a small water system in Snohomish County, \$34,240 for gross negligence and intentional violations of drinking water rules.

The fine is one of the largest the agency has ever levied against a water system. It reflects repeated violations of rules requiring owners to properly maintain their water systems in order to protect customers' health. Owners must regularly monitor the water for potentially harmful substances and inform their customers when problems arise.

The agency's Office of Drinking Water also plans to revoke Elledge's license to operate the Mount Forest Water System for one year. The system serves 27 homes in unincorporated Snohomish County, just north of the Snohomish-King county line and west of High Bridge Road along 224th Street Southeast and 161st Avenue Southeast.

Elledge has a long record of violations since he developed the Mount Forest Water System about 20 years ago. The Department of Health has taken previous compliance action against him for failing to:

- Provide water at adequate pressure. The Mount Forest Water System experiences frequent outages.
- Monitor the water regularly for bacteria, lead, copper, naturally occurring radioactive contaminants, nitrate, and other potentially harmful chemicals.
- Respond to customer complaints.
- Notify customers of water quality and water monitoring violations as required by federal law.
- Employ a certified water system operator.
- Arrange for a sanitary survey of the water system.

—More—

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Agency records show Elledge complied with the order for a time, but has lapsed into a pattern of the same violations. As a result, the agency is taking strong enforcement action against him.

“He has been given ample opportunity to meet requirements designed to protect the health of his customers,” said Denise Clifford, director of the Office of Drinking Water. “Our many phone calls, letters, warnings, and orders obviously weren’t getting his attention.

“We’d much rather reach out and help water system operators and owners be successful, as we’ve done with this situation, but we cannot tolerate conditions that jeopardize public health.”

Elledge has 28 days to appeal the fine and license revocation to the state Department of Health’s Adjudicative Services Unit.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at http://www.doh.wa.gov for <i>a healthy dose of information</i> .
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